

Bridging & Breaking

Expanding Belonging



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Length — [30 minutes
[60 minutes
[90 minutes

Description

A 90 minute workshop drawing on real world case-studies and examples that support participants in applying the concepts of *bridging and breaking* to their own work and life experience.

Audience

High school and college students with some concept familiarity, equity advocates in non-profit sector, community organizers, members of base-building orgs, government staff.

Guiding Inquiries

- What are the strategic, structural and interpersonal mechanisms of breaking and bridging?
- How can our organizations, teams, schools, communities understand the ways we both bridge and break on our journey towards belonging?
- What role do frames, stories and narratives play in breaking and bridging?
- How can bridging create collective belonging?

Lesson at-a-Glance

- Welcome (5 minutes)
- Connecting a Continuum of Bridgers: Statements of Belief Activity (10 minutes)
- Connecting to Content: Video & Group Discussion (15 minutes),
- Creative Statements of Belief: What do you believe about bridging? (10 minutes),
- [Connecting to Conversations of Othering & Belonging](#): Close Reading & Discussion (45 minutes),
- Closing (5 minutes)
- Bonus Activity: Connecting to Compassion: Creative Reflections

Outcome

- Learners will gain an introductory understanding of the mechanics of Bridging.
- Learners will watch [Bridging: Towards a Society Built on Belonging](#) video and have the opportunity to apply these concepts to their own lives.
- Learners will draft a poetic statement of belief modeled after historic Bridgers past and present

Facilitator's Materials

- Copy of "Praxis in Belonging" Agenda
- Large Butcher Paper or Chart Paper
- Markers / Pens for Whiteboard / Chart Paper
- [Creative Statements of Belonging Template](#)

Room Set-up/Pre-Work

- Copies of [Stories of Bridging Activity](#) (1 copy per learner)
- Copies of [Bridging and Breaking Frame](#) (1 copy per learner)

- Arrange chairs / desks in a circle or U-shape.
- Prepare “Belief” Activity (only 1 option). Either:
 - Print. Cut. And place quotes into jar.
 - Write out. Tape “Belief” quotes on large butcher paper around the room.
 - Print full set of quotes on a single sheet.

Participants should have laptop / viewing devices, journals/paper and writing utensils.

Sources/Resources**[Huffington Post: Jeff Chang Talks “Who We Be’](#)**

Film Links:

[Video Transcript - Bridging: Towards A Society Built on Belonging](#)
(Animated Video)

[Bridging: Towards a Society Built on Belonging](#)
(Animated Video)

Related Frames and Tools: See Activity Guide

Bridging & Breaking

Dialogues of Belonging

Lesson Plan



The Context/ Framing the Issue

The way people, communities, and structures of power *make meaning* of rapid change determines if we move towards a society built on othering or one built on belonging. While breaking isolates and divides, bridging means learning to “suffer with others,” even those who might “[despitefully use you.](#)” Though it is not easy, when our collective aspiration is to *bridge* and we build power and construct narratives that are strategic enough to withstand *othering*, bridging will cut paths that lead to worlds of belonging. This is a world in which we are all made whole again.

(Start of Lesson)

Bridges are made to walk on. – bell hooks

1. Welcome 5 minutes

Welcome, [Land Acknowledgement](#), Agreements

(See ‘Activity Guide’ to consider which activities are best suited for your context. These are essential for setting the tone of the learning space)

2. Connecting a Continuum of Bridgers 10 minutes

[Statements of Belief Activity](#)

We start with an activity that helps learners make personal connections with the concept of bridging and breaking.

Take a look at the linked set of statements of value and belief that demonstrate bridging from cultural and political leaders who have committed their lives to creating a society built on belonging. Think about how these statements might support a learner’s understanding of the complex nature of bridging in their communities, and in their own lives.

There are several ways to open up the workshop and engage the group with these Belief Statements.

Idea 1: Print the page of quotes on a single handout and have the group read silently.

- a. After several minutes, open up the circle and ask participants to share the author and quote that is most resonant.

Idea 2: Cut up into individual slips of paper to be pulled from a jar.

- b. Have members in the group select a quote and read silently.
- c. After several minutes, open up the circle and ask participants to share the author and quote with the group. What resonates?

Idea 3: Write out quotes on large butcher paper and tape them around the room.

- d. Pass out 3-5 post-its per participant.
- e. Using the See, Think, Wonder Protocol, invite the group to silently walk around the room and reflect on the quotes.
- f. Have the group sprinkle See / Think / Wonder reflections on or around the quotes.

Build off of the conversation to transition the group to the next activity.

3. Video & Group Discussion
15 minutes



1. Watch [Bridging: Towards a Society Built on Belonging](#)



2. Have the group reflect briefly on the film.
 - a. What did you see? What did you hear? What do you feel?
 - b. What aspects of breaking and bridging do you want to learn more about?
 - c. What puzzles you about the ideas of breaking and bridging?
3. Share the following definitions of breaking and bridging with the group.

Breaking:

- Pulling away from other groups in ways that make it easier to tell and believe false stories of “us versus them”
- To initiate or foster practices that reinforce othering and dehumanizes a manufactured “them”
- A manufactured or manipulated inter-personal and/or structural response to a perceived “Other”

Bridging:

- Relating to other groups based on deep listening, empathetic space, and recognition of suffering
- Rejects that there is a ‘Them’ while recognizing our unique differences
- A strategic or intentional response to reject Othering

Stories and Narrative:

- Narratives of shared humanity, optimism, opportunity, and inclusion can help counteract the fear and angry populism we see today—both of which have grown out of widespread “breaking” stories that warn of a dark and scary future or an untruthful and sentimental historical past.

4. Connecting Back to the Personal
10 minutes

What do you believe about bridging?

This activity creates a structure where learners can listen to each other’s cherished values, beliefs and dreams of becoming.

1. Circle back to the activity and reflections from the first activity, Statements of Belief.
2. Using this [template](#), invite the group to pen their own creative statements of beliefs.
3. Have the group write silently for 10 minutes.
4. After 10 minutes, invite the group to share their completed statements with an elbow partner.
5. Bring the group back together.
6. Open up the circle and ask learners to share an inspiring line, phrase or idea they heard in their partner’s writing.

Statements of Belief Activity: What do you believe about bridging?

I believe the confines of prison should not limit _____.

I believe that basic necessities such as _____, _____, and _____ are what really make our communities safe.

I believe that it’s possible to live _____, and to have _____ for all people and not just for a few.

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love _____.

Despite everything, I believe that people are _____.

I believe justice should not depend on _____. Basic protections against sexual violence and access to justice should _____, no matter their gender, age, nationality or citizenship.

I believe that every person is _____.

I believe that the only viable solution to the problem of “Othering” is _____.

I believe in human beings, and that all human beings should _____.

I believe that this nation can only heal from the wounds of racism if _____.

I believe a productive national conversation about race _____.

I believe that God, Allah, the Creator, the Divine, gave us liberty and _____.

5. Close Reading & Small Group Discussion
10 minutes

Connecting to Conversations of Othering & Belonging

Take a deeper dive into the concepts of bridging and breaking, and their connection to “Othering and Belonging.” Engage in a close read of either an article, speech, or spoken word poem authored by staff and members of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.

- Step 1- Create groups of 4.
- Step 2 - Pass out a copy of the [Close Reading Prompts and Group Assignments](#).
- Step 3 - Assign one of the following texts to each group. In large workshops, some groups will have the same texts.
 - ‘Us v Them’ (article)
 - Tarell Alvin McCraney (speech excerpt)
 - Chinaka Hodge (spoken word poem)
 - “Frames for Life, Liberation, and Belonging” (short essay)
 - “Color of Reality” (video)
- Explain that each group will engage in a close reading of an assigned text using the [Save the Last Word Protocol](#) (The protocol is designed to give structure for reflection and help groups “lean into the text.”)
- After the 30 minutes, bring the group back together for a whole group discussion.

How have these pieces made you think about how art, stories and storytelling can bridge across difference?

6. Closing Reflections
10 minutes

1 - Bring everyone together in a circle to close.

2 - Ask participants to reflect on their learning today. Go around the circle and ask each participate to respond to the following question:

- What did you learn about someone in the group that you didn’t know before today?

3 - Thank the group for being together and for building communities of belonging.

Bonus Activity:
Connecting to
Compassion

1. Have the group reflect aloud or silently in journals on the following quote:

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.” -Khalil Gibran

2. Ask students to view a series of portraits of leaders past and present—Taina Vargas-Edwards, Grace Lee Boggs, Berta Cáceres, K.W. Lee, Elie Wiesel, Tupac Shakur, Frida Kahlo, and Nelson Mandela. For each leader, view a portrait of them as a child or young person and then as an adult or elder.

3. Introduce the idea of “proud wound.”

*It is important to note that bridging does not mean we “bridge into the status quo.” As well, it does not mean we must remain within and create a life built upon personal and collective wounds.

4. Ask the group to consider what may have occurred in each person’s life between infancy/youth and adulthood/eldership.

What personal wounds, emotional, spiritual scars could each person be carrying?

5. Have students view pictures (note: facilitator will need to collect these) of defining moments in each person’s life—Taina Vargas-Edwards’ marriage to an incarcerated man, Grace Lee Boggs’ politicization, Berta Cáceres’ threats against her life, K.W. Lee’s journey through the American South as a Civil Rights journalist, Elie Wiesel’s stay in Auschwitz (where his sister Tzipora died), Tupac’s scars after a run-in with Oakland police, Frida’s trolley accident, and (for contrast) Mandela’s release from prison.

How might each incident have inspired or shaped how each person underwent bridging?

Activity Guide

Welcome and Opening Activities

Alter/Altar Space

As time and space allows, prepare the space for learning by making room for viewing films, holding circle, and engaging with exercises particular to your module. Optionally set a place for inclusion of any relevant objects of beauty or importance (books, flowers, art, etc.) and inviting participants to do the same.

Music

Play music as participants arrive and get settled. Some suggestions for songs: We Are-Sweet Honey and the Rock, Pata Pata-Miriam Makeba, People Everyday, Two Hearts-Valerie June, Waiting in Vain- Bob Marley, Can I Kick It-A Tribe Called Quest, I Am That I Am-Peter Tosh.

Circle Process

Most lessons open and close with circles, where participants and facilitator(s) stand or sit in a circle (or semi-circle or oval as needed!) in order to transform traditional, hierarchical learning spaces into collaborative community spaces.

Breathing Exercise

Invite participants to engage in an embodied practice of mindfulness and internal and external presence.



This icon indicates a talking point.

You might say something like: *“Exhale first. Breathe in deeply. Hold it for a moment. Exhale slowly.” (pause) Now take 3 deep breaths on your own. When you breathe in allow yourself to receive the air. As you exhale, relax completely.”*

Land Acknowledgement

Open with an acknowledgement of the land we stand on. Explain that land acknowledgement is an important element of reckoning with our collective past. It is a way to shift power by remembering and honoring the historical truth, the trauma, and the knowledge that our indigenous family is still here and has for centuries maintained stewardship over the land we are on.

A formal, opening acknowledgment of the indigenous land we stand on includes acknowledgement of the indigenous community whose land was colonized (in North American contexts). If more research is needed by facilitator, <https://native-land.ca> is an excellent resource.

Conocimiento

A Spanish word meaning “knowledge or conscience.” The Conocimiento Principle, a principle of the Latinx/Chicanx movement for transformation and equity, recognizes that common unity begins with the process of shared awareness and understanding, or Conocimiento.

–Roberto Vargas, Ph.D

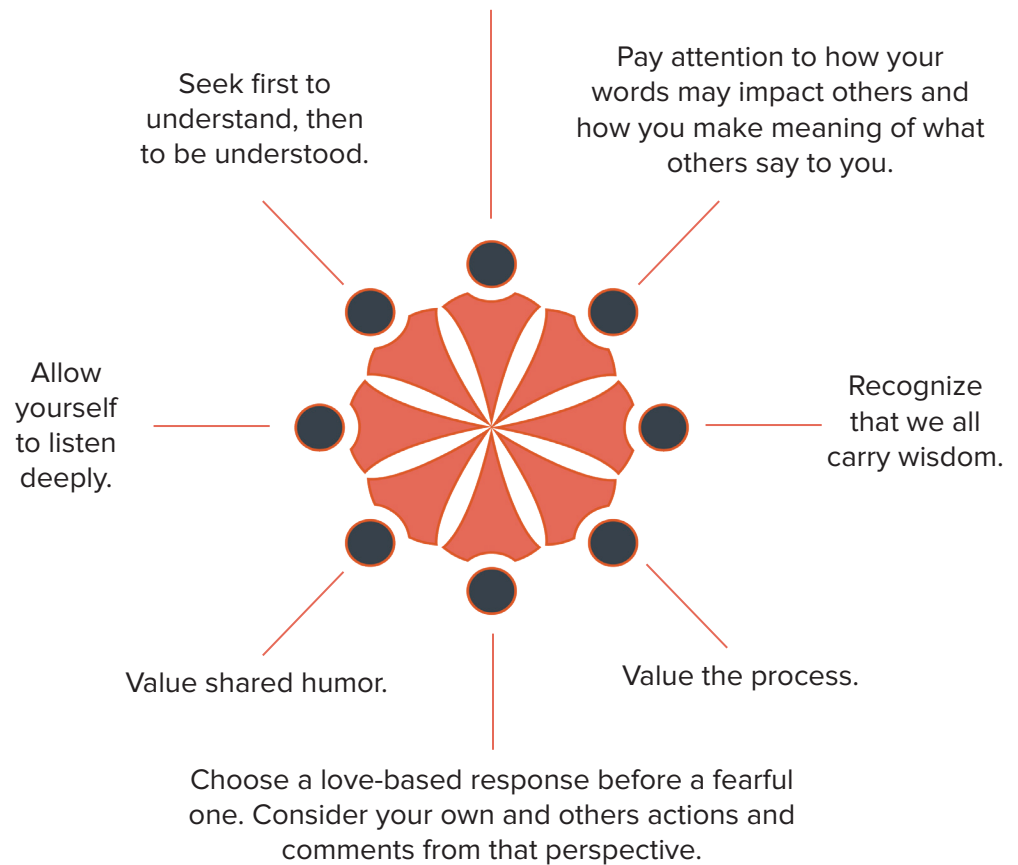


You might say something like... *“Conocimiento was used and highlighted during the Farm Workers’ Movement in California to bring people together in community to understand and leverage each others’ strengths.”*

The process of Belonging begins by identifying what’s already beautiful and present. Conocimiento is a practice that centers the human experience as meaningful and worthy. It is a practice that shares and uplifts the strengths of each person in relation to the collective, in order to achieve a common purpose. It will be important to practice *conocimiento* in your workshops to support people’s ability to feel immediately connected for a common cause.

Community Agreements

Use and adapt these agreements to help set the tone, intentions, values and ethics of the learning environment.



Various Thinking and Speaking Protocols

Save the Last Word - Save the Last Word is a thinking and discussion routine used to clarify and deepen thinking about a text.

See, Think, Wonder - See, Think, Wonder is a thinking routine developed by Project Zero (Harvard Graduate School of Education) to help learners make careful observations and develop their own ideas and interpretations of what they see.

- What do you see?
- What do you think about what you see?
- What does it make you wonder about?

Parts, Purposes, Complexities - Parts, Purposes and Complexities is a thinking routine that helps learners slow down and make careful, detailed observations of an object or system they are examining. This routine encourages them to look beyond the obvious features of an object or system and to consider its functions and complexities. Parts, Purposes and Complexities is a thinking routine created by Agency by Design with Harvard Project Zero.

- What are the parts? What are its various pieces or components?
- What are its purposes? What are the purposes for each of these parts?
- What are the complexities? How is it complicated in its parts and purposes, what are some complexities of the relationships between the two, what questions arise?

Speaking Order

Speaking Order is used in social practice circles around the world. It is one way to address and practice the reversal of systemic inequities introduced and held by white supremacy and patriarchy. Speaking order supports a shift in power from the people who have been granted the most power in our society based on colonialism, imperialism, and paternalism. These systems function to bias societies towards a worldview of hierarchical domination over others rather than a holding a viewpoint of community wisdom and collective good.

Speaking Order is often difficult to explain in settings where the system of inequity is not understood by all in the room, particularly with people in positions of privilege (such as white men) who may be used to holding more space in conversation and/or decision making, or are new to understanding white privilege and the role it plays in perpetuating the historical oppression of people of color around the world.



To introduce Speaking Order, you might say something like: *“We are going to practice shifting the power dynamics today. We will use Speaking Order as a way to reckon with our shared history of imperialism and a white ruling class. Speaking Order will ask that anyone who self identifies as having been granted the most unearned power in our society... based on factors of race, gender, age, religion, ability, etc...will let others speak before weighing in. Again, we ask the group to internally self-identify and simply stay mindful throughout our time together of who takes up the most/least airtime in group discussions and decisions. Speaking Order asks that the floor be turned over to lead from the wisdom of those who have been most “Othered” and carried most of the burden of societal oppressions. We acknowledge that there can be discomfort around this ask regardless of your positionality or “situatedness”, but invite this practice as a model for authentic reconciliation and as a path to increase mutual Belonging.”*

More Useful Resources

- [Culturally Responsive Resources](#)
- [Restorative Circle Processes](#)
- [Pillars of Andragogy](#)